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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL PRE-ELECTION SNAPSHOT

REF: WARSAW 3557 AND PREVIOUS

1. Summary: Civic Platform's (PO's) Donald Tusk remains in the lead for the October 9 first round of the Polish presidential race, with today's final pre-election polls showing his edge over Law and Justice (PiS) challenger, Lech Kaczynski varying from just one to eight points. Other candidates fall well back in the pack. With Tusk's lead narrowing and his support shy of the 50-percent mark, the question remains whether the PO candidate will prevail in the decisive second-round October 23. Deferring to presidential politics, PiS candidate for prime minister, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, will present his government's program on October 10, and announce his cabinet formally on October 24. End Summary.

2. PO standard bearer, Donald Tusk, is holding on to his lead over PiS rival Lech Kaczynski, although one poll shows that lead down to one slender point. Two other polls show Tusk holding a six and eight-point lead over Kaczynski, with Samoobrona's Andrzej Lepper following distantly with twelve points and SdPL's Marek Borowski with eleven points. Attention is centered on the second-round run-off between PO and PiS, and who will gain the support of third party voters. While the turnout is expected to exceed that of September 25 parliamentary election (just 40 percent), it may fall short of percentages in previous presidential elections.

3. The Democratic Party's Henryka Bochniarz, told reporters she would urge her supporters to vote for Tusk in the second round. Those supporting minor parties in the first round may well be the difference in determining whomever prevails on October 23. Left-of-center voters may well gravitate towards Tusk, whereas Self Defense voters may find Lech Kaczynski's nationalism more appealing. Polls suggest that the second round will be close, and two weeks has proved to be a long time in Polish political life. Voter fatigue may be a further issue, with Poles growing tired of a nearly endless stream of newspaper articles on the candidates, their wives, and even would-be presidential cats.

4. Tusk and Kaczynski squared off in a televised debate on October 6 that most viewers called a draw. Both share a common vision of the broad aspects of Polish foreign policy, but differed in emphasis in some notable ways. On Russia, Tusk emphasized the need to work closely with Germany and within EU channels to facilitate Russia's integration with the West. Kaczynski, however, said he would coordinate closely with Washington on Russian policy. On domestic policies, Tusk earlier on October 6 criticized PiS proposals on health care that would increase government subsidies in this sector.

5. PiS candidate for prime minister, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, announced he will present the broad outlines of the new government's program on October 10, and his cabinet selections on October 24, the day after the second round of the presidential election. While speculations about ministers continues, final decisions will depend on the outcome of the presidential race. Ashe